



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0509

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee of Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 for the Transition Aged Youth Diversion Program in the fiscal year 2023 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

The project sponsor for this project is the Contra Costa County Office of the District Attorney, and the project is located at 900 Ward Street, Martinez, CA 94553.

The Contra Costa District Attorney's Office is the sole prosecuting agency within Contra Costa County. Their sole mission is to seek justice and enhance public safety for all residents. The primary goal of the Transition Aged Youth Diversion Program is to implement a ground-breaking model for rethinking how the developmental characteristics of transition age youth (TAY) should inform the criminal justice response to this population. Eligible young adults, ages 18 -25, may participate in the Transition Aged Youth Diversion Program instead of the regular criminal court process, with the aim of supporting positive life outcomes and avoiding recidivism.

There has never been a post-arrest, pre-charge diversion program in Contra Costa County aimed at prevention over incarceration for TAY (18-25 years old). TAY are system impacted and bear the burden of systemic inequities including racial and ethnic disparities. Data confirms that youth of color bear the brunt of California's justice system, and that youth of color are primarily impacted by the system. Across the state there is a demand for change. Correctional institutions can magnify the problem, rather than help reduce high recidivism rates. Resources for this group of young people are extremely limited.

The main idea of this program is to implement an alternative pathway for TAY who are arrested for specified felonies and serious misdemeanors. The Transition Aged Youth Diversion Program is part of a larger movement to recognize young adults in the justice system as a distinct group with distinct needs. TAY are disproportionately represented in the justice system, disproportionately arrested, and have the highest recidivism rate of any group. The Transition

Aged Youth Diversion Program is a shift away from a punitive response and towards rehabilitative services, with a focus on healing, restoration, and accountability. The primary goal is to redirect youth from the criminal justice system, reduce the pipeline into the justice system, reduce recidivism, and reduce racial disparities in the justice system.

The District Attorney's office will work with other justice partners to develop case eligibility requirements, avoid net-widening, and focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities. The bold idea is to invest in prevention over incarceration. Their key partner agreement includes Probation, Public Defender, RYSE Youth Center, F.L.Y., Impact Justice, Mental Health, and Housing and Employment Services. Youth will be provided with wraparound services that are trauma informed, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate.

Felony and misdemeanor cases are eligible (with certain exclusion such as gang allegations, domestic violence, and sex offender registrants). Cases are screened by the District Attorney's Office for eligibility and are then referred to partner agencies for an assessment and link to services, case management, housing, job training, education therapy, parenting and health care. Participants are held accountable using a restorative justice model. The structured process is expected to last 10-12 months.

Funding for this project would be a good use of taxpayer funds, as it would help avoid further adult criminality and incarceration by expanding available resources and restorative-justice programs focused on young offenders. In reducing recidivism, this program will help reduce resources that need to be devoted to the corrections system and help more young individuals more productively and successfully thrive over the course of their lives, contributing to the general welfare of their families and communities.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry McNerney", with a stylized, flowing script.

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress